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MISCELLANY

I.

A CATHOLIC BIBLIOGRAPHY OF HISTORICAL LITERATURE

It would be carrying water into the Mississippi to offer to the readers of the CATHOLIC HISTORICAL REVIEW any lengthy argument in favor of a Catholic historical literature. The very words: Inquisition, Martin Luther, Henry VIII, Gregory VII, Alexander VI, suggest some of the topics which are made the object of historical attacks upon the Church and her institutions. But even if there were no such assaults, the Catholic portion of educated America would still remain obliged to contribute its share toward the establishment of truth in so important a branch of human knowledge. Besides, as the early periods of Christianity have found their historians who recorded its trials and triumphs, so the Church looks to us for men who will transmit to posterity the endeavors and achievements of our own times.

Though we are very far from possessing that amount of historical literature which would be in proportion to our numerical strength, the number of historical publications on our side is not quite so small as some faint-hearted souls are inclined to believe. Unfortunately most of what we have is too little known, or, to use a commercial term, too little advertised. We neither read nor consult nor buy nor recommend these books as much as they deserve. Of some precious volumes, perhaps, we have never heard. Others are not unknown to us; but since we have not been obliged to use them for some time, they have escaped our memory in the moment when they would be most useful.

For all these reasons a CATHOLIC LIST OF HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS is a desideratum. It would serve the beginner as an introduction to this important section of literature, and would appeal not only to those who either teach or study history, but also to the general public. It could be kept upon the study table and at the editorial desk, placed in Catholic and other libraries, and serve even the bookseller in replenishing his stock. Hence a few words on a Catholic Bibliography of historical writings are perhaps not unwelcome to the readers of this REVIEW.¹

It is designedly that I put the word "Catholic" before the term "List" and not before "Historical Publications." In our ideal list

¹ This article is more or less along the lines of a communication sent to the Buffalo Convention of the Catholic Educational Association, which is reprinted in the official *Report* (1917) on pp. 192-196.

we should, I think, by no means exclude such *works of non-Catholics* as contain practically no errors. In many sections we have no equivalent to offer. Besides, it is hardly necessary to emphasize a Catholic viewpoint on certain matters, the Peloponnesian War, for instance. But the catalogue as such must be Catholic. Whatever books we admit to it must at least not be anti-Catholic nor such as are likely to endanger the faith of those who will peruse them. But there is no reason why we should not recommend good and useful books by non-Catholics to enable our teachers and students to get the best of everything. Appropriate remarks can warn against isolated misstatements or erroneous tendencies.

As to the *books of Catholic authors*,² however, the list should be as complete as possible. Even books that are out of print should not easily be omitted, as they may be consulted in libraries or acquired second hand. To give an instance, *The Making of Italy*, by The O'Cleary (an Irish officer in the papal army of 1870) will for a long time remain the classic on this subject, though it is almost impossible to get hold of a copy. In this way attention may be called to some volumes tucked away in a pastor's or family library, which otherwise would be in danger of being thrown upon the rubbish pile.

We have a goodly number of *biographies*, many of which possess great historical value. A class by themselves are the *historical novels*, which often draw a more vivid picture of actual conditions than serious history, and are apt to provoke an appetite for more solid mental food.

Present-day historians have produced one particular kind of books, with which we Catholics have every reason to be satisfied. I refer to the collections and translations of *historical sources* whether original or secondary. Of supreme value are original sources. We want to get the truth and get it if possible at first hand. However, not all of them,

² It may be well to forestall right here an objection often encountered, namely, that fable that Catholic books as a class are inferior to those produced by non-Catholics. They are, it is said, deficient in style, their make-up is poor, and yet the price is comparatively much higher. This may be the case with some of them, but it remains to be proved that it is so with the greater number. *As a class they possess one inestimable advantage*: they are correct in regard to Faith and Morals. This outweighs many a disadvantage and well deserves to be paid for by a higher price. We Catholics have to pay for our religion by maintaining churches and schools, by giving up lucrative positions if they become for us proximate occasions of sin, and by letting alone unlawful means in the pursuit of temporal profit. We must be prepared to make financial sacrifices for correct books as well. It is my personal opinion, however, that generally speaking the volume produced by the Catholic author and publisher is not more expensive than any of those hailing from other sources. At any rate, *we must make the best of what we have*.

can be recommended without restriction. In some of them the documents have not always been selected without bias; others give inaccurate translations; and others embody their errors in introductions and notes.

How to be carried out. Who should take the lead in this matter—the Catholic University, or the Catholic Educational Association or the International Catholic Truth Society, or the United States Catholic Historical Society or the American Catholic Historical Society? I do not care to answer this question. I only wish to remark that better results are likely to be obtained if the task is divided among many workers according to periods or phases of history or the sundry classes of historical literature.

But a beginning must be made. No doubt many of those who are teaching or studying history can compile a catalogue of books on some particular point. It may be that some have already done so. Let them begin by publishing the fruits of their labor in some Catholic magazine or newspaper. Let them not wait for a commander-in-chief to give the signal. Let them not think that possibly they are duplicating labor. Maybe they are, but what of it? The work of compiling is instructive by itself. The compiler can only gain by it and become a better judge of the work of others. Noisy renown the work will not bring; the compiler will not be deluged with letters. Yet like the Arrow and Song in Longfellow's poem his list will land in some place where it will be welcome. It will reach the silent scholar, who has been waiting for something of this sort. Here it will be clipped out and preserved for reference as a labor-saving device. The compiler should, however, not fail to mail it personally to those whom he thinks are interested. As it is understood that such short bibliographies are at the free disposal of other volunteers, they will become more and more consolidated and finally coalesce into one or several larger annotated catalogues.

To make this labor more practical and fruitful, the title, the names of author and publisher, and the year of printing (or copyright) should be as accurately given as possible. Nor should the price be omitted; commercial though this looks, it is useful and will save much trouble to prospective buyers.

There should be as many *notes* as are desirable to characterize the book. Sometimes the title is sufficient for this purpose, though short remarks are nearly always useful. They may be based, best of all, upon the compiler's own observation, or be culled from the preface, or from some review, or may simply consist of a few items of the table of contents. If the book is not unobjectionable, this circumstance must of course be mentioned and some corrective suggestion added.

This method will bring out many details which otherwise might be overlooked. It will at the same time contribute greatly toward stimulating a more general interest in this class of literature. Kindly criticism must be freely offered and will be taken in good part.³

Let me remind the editors of periodical publications that an annotated list of books on any subject would be as good a contribution as many a pretentious article and perform a great service to the cause of Catholicity. Such bibliographies should not be considered as a kind of advertisement, for which the publishers of the books are expected to pay. The spread of good books will strengthen the spirit of religion in general and will in the end redound to the intellectual as well as pecuniary advantage of the Catholic press.

As the CATHOLIC HISTORICAL REVIEW is dedicated to *American History*, a word concerning the literature of the history of our own country may be in place. Many of our Catholic publications of this kind are not simply literature but participate in the nature of sources. Parishes, districts, dioceses, and states possess printed accounts of the establishment and progress of Catholicity and Catholic institutions. Though with little care, some of them might have been made more useful, still even as they are they cannot be despised. Here belong also the biographies of American prelates, priests and other prominent Catholics. Will not someone—or someones—prepare for us a catalogue of them?

Such books are often found in the libraries of the older clergy; and in case of death of their owner they run the risk of being disposed of by the pound to the rag peddler. A little foresight could secure them for the diocesan seminary or some other ecclesiastical institution where they will be appreciated, preserved, and in due time render valuable service.

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³ To make a beginning I have already published, in Preuss' *Fortnightly Review* (July 1, 1917, p. 195ff.) the book list which is appended to my *Ancient History*. It does not claim to be perfect.